SCS KATSARIS, Maria

GSA FPMR 101 CFR 101-11.6

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY _____ DATE
RDS☐or XDS☐ENT. DATE
TS AUTH. _____ REASON(S)
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED☐ RELEASABLE☑
RELEASE DENIED☐
FA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

397

TO : File

DATE: September 29, 197

FROM : CONS/Richard A. Mc Coy

SUBJECT: PEOPLE'S TEMPLE IMMIGRANTS - MARIA KATSARIS

On September 29 Mr. Steve A. Katsaris, DPOB: March 26, 1928, Ohio, came to the Embassy to discuss with me his daughter, Maria, who is currently residing at the People's Temple Agricultural Community in Jonestown, Northwest District.

Mr. Katsaris stated that he had come to Guyana to see his daughter because he was concerned about her well being. Mr. Katsaris continued that up until just recently (about three to four months), his daughter had invited him to visit her in Guyana. However, in the last two or three radio telephone conversations he has had with her, she had suddenly changed her mind and began telling him not to come that she did not want to see him. Mr. Katsaris indicated he was concerned for two reasons:-

1) That she has been psychologically pressured by the People's Temple to turn against him or

2) the group does not want to be seen by any outsiders, therefore, she had been pressured into telling him not to come.

Mr. Katsaris explained that he was not opposed to the People's Temple or even his daughter being a member. However, he was very worried about her and in particular her mental condition. He did not want to force himself upon her but, on the other hand, he could not understand why she refused to come to Georgetown to see him. He feared that she is now in some physical danger because of his pressure to see her.

I explained to Mr. Katsaris that while I sympathized with him as a father, officially, there was nothing I could do. His daughter is over 21 years of age and of course, had the right to determine who she will and will not see. Furthermore, I pointed out I had received a telegram from her which indicated she did not wish to see him. I also mentioned that the People's Temple representatives played a tape in my presence of the radio telephone conversation between Maria and a member of the People's Temple in

Buy U.S. Savings Bonds Regularly on the Payroll Savings Plan

Georgetown in which she indicated very strongly that she did not wish to see her father. Mr. Katsaris stated that he was from Ukiah, California, and was by profession a psychologist. He said he was aware of the allegations in the press in the U. S. made against the People's Temple. He continued that when his daughter first joined the organization he was happy because it seemed to be a worthwhile religious organization, which was dedicated to helping the poor and disadvantaged. However, he noticed that over a period of time his daughter became secretive about her church activities. However, he continued to support her in the church and even on occasion donated small sums of money to the People's Temple. Mr. Katsaris then showed me letters he had received from Maria over the past several months and asked whether I thought these letters indicated a relationship that was presumably as bad as Maria had indicated to me through her telephone conversation and telegram. The letters were warm and long, filled with descriptions of her life in Georgetown and in the Northwest region. They did not indicate that she was a sibling who hated or feared her father. I indicated to Mr. Katsaris that I believed I had seen his daughter during my visit to Jonestown on August 30th. I described her to him and the conditions of the farm and told him I had met her fiance, a young doctor attached to the community.

Mr. Katsaris concluded the conversation stating that he would most probably return to Washington to talk to people he knew there to determine if there was something that could be done in this matter. I pointed out to him that should the Department of State request me to make personal, private contact with his daughter I would do so. However, I emphasized to him that there was no way that I could prove if she was under any serious mental strain unless she chose to tell me so. Naturally, I would observe what I could about conditions at the farm but that unless a formal complaint was made, I had no authority to conduct any investigation or request the assistance of the local authorities to do so.

c.c. Ambassador
Deputy Chief of Mission

CONS:RAMcCoy:ddh